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WORKS IN PROGRESS

ESTABLISHED IN 1990 BY THE THURSTON COUNTY RAINBOW COALITION

What's up with WROC?

Welfare rights organizer explains next steps for Olympia

by Monica Peabody

I have been involved with the Welfare Rights Organizing Coalition (WROC), for a long time. I have a 17 year old daughter and became aware of WROC when she was an infant and we lived in a studio apartment in Seattle. Her father had abandoned us and no one wanted to hire a woman who refused to put her newborn into daycare, insisting she could work with her on her back.

I began receiving AFDC (Aid to Families With Dependent Children), the name then for welfare cash payments. It wasn't much, but thanks to an innovative program called FIP (Families Independence Program), it covered expenses. It was my first experience with state offices and acronyms. FIP was created by policy makers enlightened enough to imagine that if welfare moms were encouraged to go to school, look for living wage jobs, and make wise choices, they would gain financial independence faster. Therefore, rather than splitting payments into a cash grant and food stamps, they provided a lump sum and optional budgeting classes. My daughter and I received slightly more than $700 a month for all our expenses.

> After two months of attempted negotiations, the membership has decided to leave the remains of WROC to build a new organization that can get back to doing the real work of empowering welfare recipients.

I never imagined those would be the good old days, but compared to current welfare reform policies that limit education and push parents into low wage jobs, it was idyllic. Like most welfare recipients, I sometimes experienced respectful and efficient caseworkers, but other caseworkers were rude and unprofessional. They seemed determined to prove that I was beneath them—that I deserved none of what they reluctantly offered.

These experiences, combined with the impersonal and humiliating operations of the welfare system, caused me to experience self-doubt and to lose confidence in my abilities. It reinforced the negative race and class stereotypes I had been fed by my culture about welfare recipients. In my ignorance, I thought I was different: I had a good reason to collect welfare, unlike the other recipients, whom I viewed as streetwise and dangerous.

Fresh from a closeted, abusive relationship, I didn't have much of a community, but I began to meet other single mothers in my low-rent apartment complex and at the parks and grocery stores. No one better understood what I was going through; we shared information and recounted the traumas of poverty and single-parenthood. Whenever I mentioned a nasty encounter with a welfare caseworker, it always elicited the same response: "Call WROC." So I did. I learned my rights and was given the tools and encouragement to stand up to unfair caseworkers.

When my daughter was a toddler, the FIP program ended. Despite FIP's success, the policy makers deemed FIP too expensive in the short term. By success, I mean that women were finishing their degrees, competing for living wage jobs and leaving assistance for good. The FIP recipients I know now own homes and have jobs with benefits that pay living wages and have not needed state assistance for years. Unfortunately, current welfare policies force single parents into a revolving-door life of poverty—constantly being shoved from welfare benefits, to entry level low-paying jobs, and then back to benefits again—never allowing them to escape the cycle of poverty that entraps them.

With the end of FIP in 1993, my cash grant went down to $440 a month (cash grants have not increased to this day!).I also received slightly under $200 in food stamps. I could no longer afford my $400 studio apartment. I gave my notice and moved further into the low rent district—into a two-bedroom house I shared with another mother and her son.

Sharing expenses almost enabled welfare to meet our basic needs. The other bonus was our new house was just blocks from the WROC office. I decided to give back to the organization that had given me so much confidence and power in the face of a terribly disempowering bureaucracy. I joined the policy committee and started attending monthly meetings. My daughter got her first taste of videotapes and lunch meat and never failed to remind me of upcoming meetings!

At my first WROC meeting, I was intimidated by the other welfare moms due to my own internalized stereotypes. Far from the negative welfare stereotypes, however, I found them to be kind, intelligent, and resourceful women. Although we came from different backgrounds and had different stories to tell, we shared a fierce commitment to our children's well-being and to social and economic justice. I found an outlet to vent my political frustrations, as well as a community of resourceful and compassionate people.

WROC forms in Olympia

In 1995, when our children were five, my housemate wanted to move to Olympia to continue her education at Evergreen. We decided to keep our household intact, so I found myself in Olympia at the dawn of welfare reform.

I began cleaning houses, earning enough to lower my welfare payments, but not enough to do without them altogether. When my daughter was 8, the state finally increased her absentee father's child support payments from $50 a month to $285. This, along with my earnings, allowed me to terminate my welfare grant, but not before I met other moms in the welfare office who were struggling with the new welfare reform policies. They were being told they had to quit college and look for low wage work and take the first job offered, regardless of whether it paid a living wage. They were told they had to put their children in childcare or lose their welfare benefits, despite a lack of availability of childcare slots, especially for infants.

I looked for WROC, but there was no welfare rights group in Olympia. These women had nowhere to turn. Not only did they need to know their rights, they needed to get together to share, vent, and gain strength and knowledge from each other.

Cartoon by Jared Souza

I began to talk to everyone I met about the lack of a local welfare rights group, and I was met with a tremendous amount of interest and support—not only from other low income parents, willing to make time for social justice amidst their struggles to survive, but from other community members concerned about what was happening to welfare families. Step by step—with the help of too many people to count—we built a local chapter of WROC in Olympia.

I worked close to a year without pay, taking advocacy calls, organizing meetings and connecting with other organizations and agencies. But this was unsustainable. It became apparent that for the Olympia chapter of WROC to thrive, we needed a full-time organizer.

WROC Olympia supporters were able to secure a two-year VISTA position to fund my work. With the stipend I received from VISTA, I was able to stop house cleaning and do welfare rights work full time!

When the VISTA position ended, WROC had grown enough financially, in part from our expanded scope, to hire me as a full-time organizer. Ten years of hard work and a lot of community support has turned WROC Olympia into a well-known support system for low-income parents from Tacoma to Vancouver, as well as a political force well known by DSHS and state legislators.

WROC board decisions

Like many nonprofit organizations, WROC's board has had its ups and downs. The board has always met in Seattle, where WROC's administrative work is done. Over the years, Olympia and Vancouver have had little to no board representation, as the board is primarily made up of low-income folks who find it difficult to travel. In February of this year, five new members joined the board bringing WROC's total board membership to seven. Although WROC's bylaws express a preference for consensus, board decisions can be made by a majority vote.

Within a month of joining the board, without any notice to the membership or staff, the new board members made a number of surprising decisions. With only a week's notice, they laid off all of WROC's staff, which consisted of me and our executive director of twenty years, who was scheduled to retire in two months because she has terminal breast cancer. With less than a month's notice, they cancelled the annual Seattle fundraiser, which—in addition to being a central fundraising tool with guaranteed income for the organization—was to be our executive director's retirement party.

▸ **WROC** continued on page 4

Works in Progress
PO Box 295
Olympia WA 98507

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Works In Progress is a free, volunteer-operated progressive community newspaper based in Olympia, Washington. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of *Works In Progress* and are solely those of the authors.

Submissions
Please send text as Word attachments. Artwork and photos can be sent electronically or we can scan them for you as camera-ready/black & white.

WIP reserves the right to publish in whole or part all submissions. For editing purposes, please enclose your phone number.

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If you don't see your issue being covered in Works In Progress, *it's because you aren't writing about it! (Or aren't finding someone else to cover it!)*

Send submissions to *submissions@olywip.org* or mail to Works In Progress, PO Box 295, Olympia, WA 98507-0295.

Governing Tool
The following statement is part of the Editorial Policy and is the governing tool for the Anti-Discrimination Clause:

WIP *will make every effort to work with the contributor of material considered by* WIP *to be offensive in order to reach a mutually agreed upon resolution, but* WIP *reserves the right as a last resort to edit or not print submitted material.*

Mission Statement
"Our aim is to confront injustice and encourage a participatory democracy based on economic, social, and environmental justice. *Works In Progress* is dedicated to providing a voice for those most affected by the exclusionary and unfair practices that seek to silence the oppressed."

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We will collectively endeavor to be sensitive and respectful to all those oppressed in this society, and their issues. However, if and when we should make a mistake in this regard, we expect to acknowledge it and to express regret for injury or insult given.

Back Issues
Some back issues are available in the Timberland Library system. *WIP* is being archived on microfilm by the UW Library.

WORKERS IN PROGRESS

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IMAGINE A COVER: Absent this month due to funding deficits, it's donations from readers like you that will keep that wall-to-wall WIP cover collage in the guest bedroom going strong. ***See page 8 for more details.***

WIP Schedule

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Homes First! seeking board members

Homes First! is a local non-profit housing provider that is seeking volunteer board members to represent a tenants' points of view. Homes First! provides high quality, affordable rental housing throughout Thurston County to families with low incomes, people with disabilities, and people in recovery. We often partner with local service providers to offer housing with integrated services to support people who need assistance in their daily lives. Board members guide policy and make decisions about financial management and project development. The minimum time commitment for board members is participation in two meetings per month. Board members and staff work very cooperatively to offer an excellent contribution to the Thurston County community. For further information contact Executive Director Mary Ann Swain at 236-0920 or Board President Jeanne Marie Thomas at 357-2502.

Movie: *Why We Fight*

Friday, June 1st, 7:00 pm, Unitarian Universalist Congregation,
2200 East End St., NW, Olympia

"Why We Fight": He may have been the ultimate icon of 1950s conformity and postwar complacency, but Dwight D. Eisenhower was an iconoclast, visionary, and the Cassandra of the New World Order. Upon departing his presidency, Eisenhower issued a stern, cogent warning about the burgeoning "military industrial complex," foretelling with ominous clarity the state of the world in 2004 with its incestuous entanglement of political, corporate, and Defense Department interests. A fascinating and educational movie about what's really going on. Open to all; free. Donations Appreciated-- ($5 - $25) sliding scale. Discussion to follow film. Presented by: The Alliance for Democracy, South Puget Sound Chapter and The Social Justice Committee, Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation.

Protest war contractors conference, Tacoma Convention and Trade Center

June 4th – 6th, Greater Tacoma Convention and Trade Center, 1500 Broadway, Tacoma

On June 4-6, the Greater Tacoma Convention and Trade Center is hosting the "SpecOps West 2007 ExpoTrade Show and Symposium," which will share new technologies and products for "today's war fighter." There will be approximately 75 exhibitors including Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and Raytheon. Community members from Tacoma and around the Northwest are encouraged to join the demonstration and stand up to the military-industrial complex. Citizens and activists will protest outside the trade center each day to express anger and frustration that the military corporations are using our city to glorify war and destruction. Our cities cannot keep using our ports and convention centers to promote war and atrocities against other people. Demonstrations will take place outside the convention center (1500 Broadway) on Monday, June 4 at 4 p.m., Tuesday June 5 at noon, and Wednesday June 6 at noon. For more information contact Beth O'Leary of War out of Tacoma at waroutoftacoma@hotmail.com.

Border or Bust information session

Tuesday, June 5, 4 p.m. at Evergreen College, Community Based Learning and Action Center (Seminar II E 2125).

Learn some basic information about border communities, migrant experiences, and plans underway for the Olympia-area delegation. Feed your mind and your body! Reserve a plate at an Underground Immigration Cafe to hear about local migrant experiences and to learn about flagrant abuses of our constitutional and civil rights that regularly occur in border communities while eating local, organic, in-season cuisine. Go to www.borderorbust.blogspot.com for more information, including dates in June.

Understanding the June 1967 war

Tuesday, June 5, 7:00 pm
The Olympia Center, 222 Columbia St NW, downtown

With the US in its fourth year of occupation in Iraq, what lessons can be learned from Israel's 40-year occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights?

The **June 1967 War** (aka the **"Six-Day War"**) secured US military support for Israel, turned Israel into a US proxy in the Middle East, initated the process of illegal settlement-building, and started the longest military occupation in modern history.

In order to understand US foreign policy in the Middle East and US support for Israel, you must understand what happened in June 1967.

Featured speakers include **Farihan Bushnaq** and professors **Steve Niva** and **Therese Saliba**.

(See related story on page 3 and further events below)

Vigil in opposition to all occupations

June 8th, 4-6 p.m.at Percival Landing with the weekly Fellowship of Reconciliation and Women in Black vigils.

A vigil to show opposition to all occupations, on the 40th anniversary of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. For more information, please contact Olympians for Peace in the Middle East at opme@attbi.com.

The Rachel Corrie Foundation for peace and justice presents Dr. Mona El-Farra

Sunday, June 17, 7:00 pm, Traditions Café, 300 5th Ave SW. Free, donations gladly accepted.

Dr. El-Farra, a Palestinian physician, activist, and mother, founded the Rachel Corrie Children and Youth Cultural Center in 2003. She is the Director of Gaza Projects for the Middle East Children's Alliance, serves as a health development consultant for the Union of Health Work Committees in Gaza, and is Vice President of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. Dr. El-Farra is an internationally-recognized human rights leader who speaks regularly at conferences in Europe and is currently writing a book with Noam Chomsky. She will be in Olympia one day only during her first US speaking tour, which will also take her to the US Social Forum in Atlanta, the national conference of United for Peace and Justice in Chicago, and to "The World Says No to Israeli Occupation" – a mass mobilization in Washington DC. All funds raised on Dr. El-Farra's tour will go directly to serving the needs of women, children, and families in the Gaza Strip.

OUT!standing: Capital City Pride's 17th annual parade

Sunday, June 17th, 12:30 p.m., with staging beginning at the Capitol Steps at 11 a.m.

Capital City Pride's 17th annual parade and celebration will be bigger than ever this year, with more than 5,000 people projected in Sylvester Park. Pride has been expanded to two days, June 16 and 17. Events leading up to the big parade and celebration in Sylvester Park include theater performances, concerts, art exhibits, outdoor recreation activities, special kids' activities, and much more. Businesses, civic organizations and other community partners are encouraged to join in the festivities. Advance registration is requested to enter cars, floats and marching contingents in the parade from the Capitol Steps to Sylvester Park. Among groups already committed are Pooches for Pride; Planet Percussion; and Parents, Friends and Families of Lesbians and Gays. Registration is free, and community groups are encouraged to sign up soon. This is an OUT!standing opportunity for area businesses to show their support and enhance their public visibility. For more information, go to the web site: http://www.capitalcitypride.net <http://www.capitalcitypride.net/>.

Our Constitution in crisis: A call to action

Sunday, June 24th, 1-5 p.m., at Pigott Auditorium on the Seattle University Campus. Doors open at 12:00 noon.

A town hall meeting. Speakers include Elizabeth de la Vega, author of United States vs. Bush et al.; Dave Lindorff, co-authored with Barbara Olshansky, A Case for Impeachment: The LegalGuide for Removing President George W. Bush from Office; and Phil Burk, impeachment expert and founder of ImpeachBush.tv. A training to prepare citizens to educate others about the US Constitution and the urgent need touse the constitutional remedy of impeachment. Our training section is designed to be self- replicating, and move across the country during this "Constitution Summer." Suggested donation $10.00.

Elizabeth Vega in Olympia

June 27th, 7 p.m., Last Word Books, Olympia

Elizabeth de la Vega, author of United States vs. Bush et al will be at Last Word Books for a book talking and signing. See www.citizensmovement.org for latest details.

Voices of youth, voices of community

Thursday, June 28th at 7 p.m., Washington Center for the Performing Arts Black Box Theater, 512 Washington Street SE, Olympia

An evening with the Mosaic Multicultural Foundation where "at risk" and "homeless" youth express their experiences of living in these troubled times. Community Youth Services is partnering with mythological storyteller Michael Meade and the Mosaic Multicultural Foundation to bring a series of workshops where young people work together for a week to craft an artful expression of their inner dreams and outer concerns. The local community is invited to witness, to discuss, and bless the aspirations and efforts of its disadvantaged young people. In this approach, youth are not simply "the problem", rather, their lives are a reflection of serious issues troubling the culture at large. When viewed this way, youth can be seen as valuable agents of change who play a necessary part in cultural education, healing, and transformation. Suggested donation of $5, no one turned away. For more information about Mosaic visit www.mosaicvoices.org or contact Jacob Lakatua at 206-935-3665.

Camp Quixote III—getting started

by Leslie Cushman

Camp Quixote has moved back downtown from its Westside location at the Olympia Unitarian Universalist Church (OUUC). The United Churches of Olympia accepted the request to host the camp when it became clear that other plans for a new site were falling through. The relocated Camp is set up to host up to 20 people and is located on a small parking lot on 11th and Washington, right next to the church building. The OUUC, as well as members from St John's Episcopal Church, pitched in on the move that took place May 19.

For the most part, things are the same at Camp Quixote III, but there are a few things that are different at this new site. The camp leadership and governance remain focused on community and direct democracy. Camp supporters still come from a number of arenas, such as the interfaith church community, Bread and Roses, and the Poor Peoples Union, as well as many people simply stopping by to give words of encouragement. Camp residents spend their day traveling to and from jobs, running errands, or taking trainings.

The few differences that exist are significant. The location of Camp Quixote III in a business and government district poses unique challenges: The site is highly visible from the street. The neighborhood has thousands of workers who walk and drive past the church twice a day. The Children's Museum is a block away, and an insurance agency is directly across the street. Law offices are nearby, and business lobbyists and associations are located throughout the area. There are coffee shops and sandwich shops up and down Capital Way. Essentially this is ground zero for the state bureaucracy and the network that supports it.

It isn't a simple matter to have a tent city in your midst. For whatever reason, some neighbors, tenants and workers are worried about the tent city residents as neighbors.

To address this head-on, the church and the camp hosted an open house for the community and neighborhood on May 24. The open house was attended by about 60 people. Pastor Mark Dowdy, Moderator Leslie Cushman, camp leader Randy Williams, and camp host Coordinator Deborah Reynolds talked about the processes put in place to address the uniqueness of this setting.

The open house included the opportunity to ask questions on how Camp Quixote III operates and on its rules of conduct. Reynolds described the health and safety measures in place and the great extent to which the camp and the church have gone to provide a safe and comfortable setting. Because of concerns for resident safety and issues raised by neighbors about security, a hospitality tent has been erected at the threshold of the camp. Reynolds is scheduling camp hosts for three-hour shifts, 24 hours a day, and she stressed that the role of the camp host is to provide privacy to the residents.

"You are the doorway for Camp Quixote," said Reynolds. After the question-and-answer session, attendees followed Randy Williams outside to the Camp where he led a tour and introduced camp residents.

"The Open House was a wonderful opportunity for our neighbors and the community to learn more about Tent City. A lot of people were put at ease simply by seeing Tent City up close and meeting residents," said Dowdy. Leslie Cushman, who is moderator of the church council this year, said church members are keenly aware that they have tremendous responsibility to do this right. Cushman said providing a safe home for the residents of Camp Quixote was ultimately a simple decision for the church because solidarity with the poor is at the core of the church's mission.

Workers construct the foundation for Camp Quixote's relocation to the United Churches of Olympia, located on 11th and Washington. Photo by Paul Peck

If you are interested in volunteering to staff the host table, please call Deborah Reynolds, the Host Coordinator, at (360) 480-6361, or e-mail her at deborahreynolds@comcast.net.

The lessons from 40 years of occupation

by Jeff Berryhill

As the US forcefully imposes a military occupation of Iraq, now in its fourth year, it is important to recognize an equally illegal and immoral occupation that has lasted forty years with the explicit approval and support of the US. I am speaking of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip that began at the conclusion of the June 1967 war, mounted in an equally aggressive manner and possessing many characteristics which are comparable to the US role in Iraq. Israel has managed this occupation with notorious impunity, ignoring rights of Palestinian self-determination and respect for human dignity, and showing disregard for international law, much in the same manner as the US intervention in Iraq. Especially noteworthy in Israel's case is the duration of the occupation, now entering its fourth decade, with minimal prospects for a resolution in the foreseeable future, due to reluctance and unwillingness on the part of American and Israeli leaders to offer or agree to acceptable proposals.

The pains and consequences of occupation cannot be ignored. An exhaustive written record exists, chronicling the atrocities visited on the inhabitants of historical Palestine. While in the American media we frequently hear about suicide bombings, rockets fired into Israel proper, and extremist denunciations of Israel's "right to exist," the violence and terror faced by Israeli citizens pales in comparison to those inflicted on Palestinians.

As a recent report released by Amnesty International illustrates, the Palestinian population suffers significantly more than Israelis, suffering over 600 deaths in 2006, one-sixth of them being children. In that same period, Israel experienced 29 deaths related to conflict. Israel's systematic campaign of violence and policies that in many respects resemble the Apartheid South African model, are conducted asymmetrically, as its power far supersedes what is launched by resistant elements. For citizens interested in justice through upholding human rights, these developments prove troubling.

From a perspective merely concerned with matters of security for both the US and Israel, new mainstream scholarship has appeared in recent years that speaks to the damage that the ongoing occupation brings both countries, most notably coming from former President Carter's new book, *Palestine: Peace not Apartheid*.

While the book fails to introduce new information for those concerned with justice and peace, its author is too influential and respectable to be dismissed. Carter introduces the conflict in a context new to the mainstream by evoking the word *Apartheid*. Carter's perspective is important in that, while the American public has historically favored the establishment of a sovereign and autonomous Palestine in some form (some polls indicate that people favor this prospect on a margin of 2-to-1), this has not translated into positive changes in the positioning of the political elite.

> Drawing connections between the occupations of Iraq and Palestine is imperative for peace and justice communities.

Respected voices often have the effect of giving space to traditionally marginalized ideas. The scope of Carter's work may be limited, but the repercussions are important. Voices advocating justice for Palestinians have easily been marginalized, due to disorganization and limited "people to people" contact, especially in contrast to the organizational capabilities of proponents of the occupation in Israel, and especially the United States. When practicing international solidarity, it is critically important to forge strong connections with the people experiencing oppression and ensure that work is highly complimentary and affirming for groups working toward common goals.

There are obvious reasons why US citizens should organize against the Israeli occupation, as the US role in brokering "peace" has been functionally one-sided. The political establishment within the US has often exacerbated the intensity of the conflict, effectively rejecting the sentiments of the international community and more moderate voices in Israel. The most important reason why Washington is unwavering in its support of Israel is that Israel, since 1967 especially, has functioned as an extension of American power designs in the Middle East.

Israel is one of the largest military powers in the world, a result of sustained contributions from the US. This largely consists of foreign aid in the form of weaponry but also includes significant loans that effectively function as grants (that Israel is not under any obligation to repay). The most recent indication of Israel operating in accord with US strategic interests is last summer's incursion into Lebanon that resulted in significant civilian casualties and the destruction of vital infrastructure devoted to providing services for the people of Lebanon. The basic strategy for the invasion had been formulated years in advance under direct consultation with US defense strategists. This served as a means to weaken Hezbollah, a group that the US considers a surrogate of Iran. Due to US complicity in Israel's repeated pattern of aggression, it is important for Americans resistant to military aggression to focus efforts on shifting the policy initiatives of their government.

Drawing connections between the occupations of Iraq and Palestine is imperative for peace and justice communities. As the violence in Iraq intensifies, and with a conclusion nowhere in sight, we must realize that our actions in this region do not occur in an isolated vacuum. The consequences of US policy range deeply, affecting the conditions and circumstances that shape the political environment in the international arena.

Because of this, the US exercises considerable influence, meaning even minor changes hold significant ramifications. Peace and justice communities must support and encourage Israeli voices that advocate a peaceful end to occupation. We should also begin engaging in solidarity activity, which is a critical component in reversing the pattern of imperialism and neocolonialism practiced in the occupied territories. Significant forms of resistance have been launched in response to both occupations, therefore organizing around the issue is not without ample historical precedent. We must reexamine our conduct and activity to approach this issue with a concerted new program for reversing the patterns of injustice and oppression. In light of recent developments and the tragic reminder offered by the fortieth anniversary of the Israeli occupation, we have an extraordinary opportunity to refocus our efforts and work toward the cause of a just and lasting peace in this war-torn region.

In early June, there are a series of events and demonstrations in both our region and nationally that I would highly encourage people to explore.

In Olympia, on June 5 at 7 pm, there will be a presentation at the Olympia Center giving a brief introduction to the 1967 war and the consequences of that event.

On June 8, there will be a vigil at Percival Landing from 4 pm to 6 pm where people in attendance will voice their opposition to both the Israeli and US occupations. (*See announcements on page 2 for more information on both events above*)

Lastly, south in Vancouver, from June 5 –7, there is an event called the Northwest Convergence Conference, which will feature the most militaristic and belligerent voices in support of Israel's continuing violation of human rights and international law. In response to the message being projected from this gathering, local organizers with Voices for Middle East Justice in Vancouver have organized a series of events and programs, advocating that justice and fairness are required for a lasting peace, not oppression and domination.

For information, visit *http://www.democracyforvancouver.org/2007/05/17/counter-the-convergence-northwest-2007-conference* or email sesame@riseup.net.

▸ **WROC** continued from page 1

Not surprisingly, the board received a deluge of inquiries from WROC members asking how they planned to continue WROC's work without staff or adequate funding.

Four of the board members resigned, leaving three: one who stood with the concerned members, and two who stood by their decisions and hired an attorney to advise them. Thirty-six WROC members attended an emergency meeting on April 11. When they learned that two of the board members planned to use WROC's dwindling funds to pay an attorney, while claiming not to be able to afford to pay staff, the large majority of attending members demanded that the board members elect new board members or step down.

Members looked to WROC's bylaws for help. Unfortunately, WROC's bylaws do not give members the right to guide the organization. The bylaws guide board members to elect new board members and make decisions with no caveat for member participation. The two board members went to court with their attorneys and received a temporary restraining order against the members, demanding that they alone be recognized as the board. Many people have asked me, who are these women? My answer is, they are us: single mothers, members of WROC. I don't understand their choices or their unwillingness to take direction from WROC members.

A new start

As you might imagine after reading my story, I felt it was important to try to save WROC and continue our important work. So did hundreds of members and supporters. But after two months of attempted negotiations with no progress, the membership has decided to leave the remains of WROC to the two remaining board members and come together to build a new organization that can get back to doing the real work of empowering welfare recipients.

To make that happen, we will need your help. WROC members from Seattle to Vancouver will meet in Olympia on June 2 to build a new organization, one that is truly member run, to continue welfare rights work statewide.

In this difficult time, the Olympia community has been wonderful. Your letters to the board, words of encouragement and fundraising have meant a lot to me and have given me the strength to carry on. I am currently receiving unemployment benefits and looking for work, while trying to maintain the office in Olympia, answer advocacy calls, and build this new organization. I am not doing this alone. We have some regular volunteers, a community jobs worker, and a work study student, thanks to the Center for Community Based Learning.

Please continue to support welfare rights work in our community. To continue, we will need:

1. **Financial support:** We need people to share their fundraising expertise or make a donation. The Coalition for Low Income Power (CLIP) has provided us with a bank account that can accept donations. You can mail checks made out to CLIP to our office at 701 Franklin Street SE, Olympia, WA 98501.

2. **Technical support** for new databases and office systems.

3. **Volunteers** to visit the local DSHS office, answer phones and do the work that we are here for: empowering low-income parents.

We hold volunteer meetings every Wednesday afternoon at 1:30 at our office in the Payne Room of the First Christian Church at 7th and Franklin. You can reach us at 352-9716 or *welfarerights@riseup.net*.

Three things I have learned

1. If you are involved in a nonprofit organization, look to your bylaws. If they give the governing body too much power over the members, change them.

2. It's the members who make an organization, not the name or bank account. What we have is the strength of a powerful membership committed to continuing to empower low-income parents with information about their rights and to fight for social and economic justice.

3. I cannot walk away from this work. I would like to serve as the Olympia welfare rights organizer for ten more years, but regardless of what happens I will always delight in watching someone learn to be their own best advocate in the face of oppression.

Professional foster parents organize

by Susan Davenport Moore

Exciting first steps toward developing a union for foster parents have been taken. The Foster Parent Association of Washington State (FPAWS) signed an affiliation agreement with the Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE) last summer. This action received international attention because it would be the first union for foster parents in the world.

The movement toward unionization was initiated by foster parents and supporting child welfare professionals who had been in the trenches for 20 years or more and had seen ineffectual system change efforts made in repeating cycles tied to changes in administration at the highest levels of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and Children's Administration. In the past decade, stories about the 'crisis in foster care' reiterate the same issues and concerns about child safety and poor treatment of foster parents ad nauseum. The group of organizers, in effect, said, "enough is enough, something different must be done."

> This new empowered movement of foster parents should appeal to progressive community members.

At the urging of social worker members, WFSE made the commitment to dedicate staff and resources to the development of a union for foster parents. A lead organizer and former foster father was hired to implement an aggressive organizing and legislative agenda. The 2007 legislative session saw unprecedented participation by foster parents and social workers. The unifying force is the shared interest of foster parents and social workers to improve working conditions and care for foster children in the state child welfare system.

The top priorities were Recognition, Rights and Systemic improvements. Major progress was achieved by the joint efforts of FPAWS and WFSE membership. Legislation that passed included foster parent eligibility for Basic Health Insurance that raised the income qualification to 300% of poverty level. This is a major gain for foster families that have no coverage for their own families while foster children are covered by medical coupons.

A piece of legislation intended to create the first stage of union recognition, called Meet and Confer status, died halfway through the session. Organizers and foster parents would not settle for this and started a letter writing and phone campaign that got the ears of several legislators, who were able to take the content of the bill as language for an amendment on Engrossed SHB1624. This requires DSHS to meet at least quarterly with foster parents, including members of FPAWS.

An additional amendment directs DSHS to cooperate with WFSE/Foster Care Division, FPAWS and the University of Washington, a group of legislators, and other professionals to study the feasibility of a "tiered classification for foster parents licensing, to include a professional classification." WFSE and FPAWS anticipate that it will be this group of foster parents who will make up the membership of the new union, even while there will continue to be volunteer foster parents and those who care for relatives' children.

This new empowered movement of foster parents should appeal to progressive community members. This will create a class of professional foster parents, passionate about positive youth development, and it will give them the opportunity to work in their homes with local youth in the "up close and personal" world of foster care. This may also encourage child welfare activists to join the first ever Foster Parent Union as a member of the Washington Federation of State Employees—Foster Care Division.

For more information about this thriving new union, contact Daryl Daugs, lead organizer for WFSE–FCD (800) 562- 6002.

Susan Davenport Moore is the Secretary of the Foster Parent Association of Washington State and serves on the Washington Federation of State Employees—Foster Care Division Steering Committee. She can be reached at 360-970-6302 or sdavenportmoore@aol.com

A downtown Co-op for Olympia at last?

by Janet Blanding

The imminent closing of the downtown Olympia Safeway on June 9 may result in the realization of a longtime dream of many Olympians: A downtown Olympia Food Co-op. Staff collective member Grace Cox confirmed that the Co-op is aggressively pursuing the option of moving into the space that will soon be vacated by the departing Safeway grocery.

"At this point, Safeway holds the cards," said Cox, "because they hold the lease for five more years."

She cautioned that there were some unknown factors, as well as financial analysis to be done before the Co-op can proceed with a definite plan. But Cox affirmed a strong commitment to realizing the dream of a downtown Co-op, adding "I've wanted that location for 20 years."

When the Co-op asked its membership to weigh in with ideas for expansion during the election that ended in November 2006, a desire for an additional downtown store was strongly indicated. Their website reports, "It is the goal of the Olympia Food Co-op to open a new store in downtown Olympia. The guidelines for size are 5,000 to 10,000 square feet." The Safeway store is 19,332 square feet, which makes it larger than the guidelines, but Cox remarked that the members voted a preference for co-locating with other businesses and nonprofits that support the goals of the Co-op Mission statement.

Updates about the status of negotiations with Safeway are posted on the doors of the existing Co-op stores.

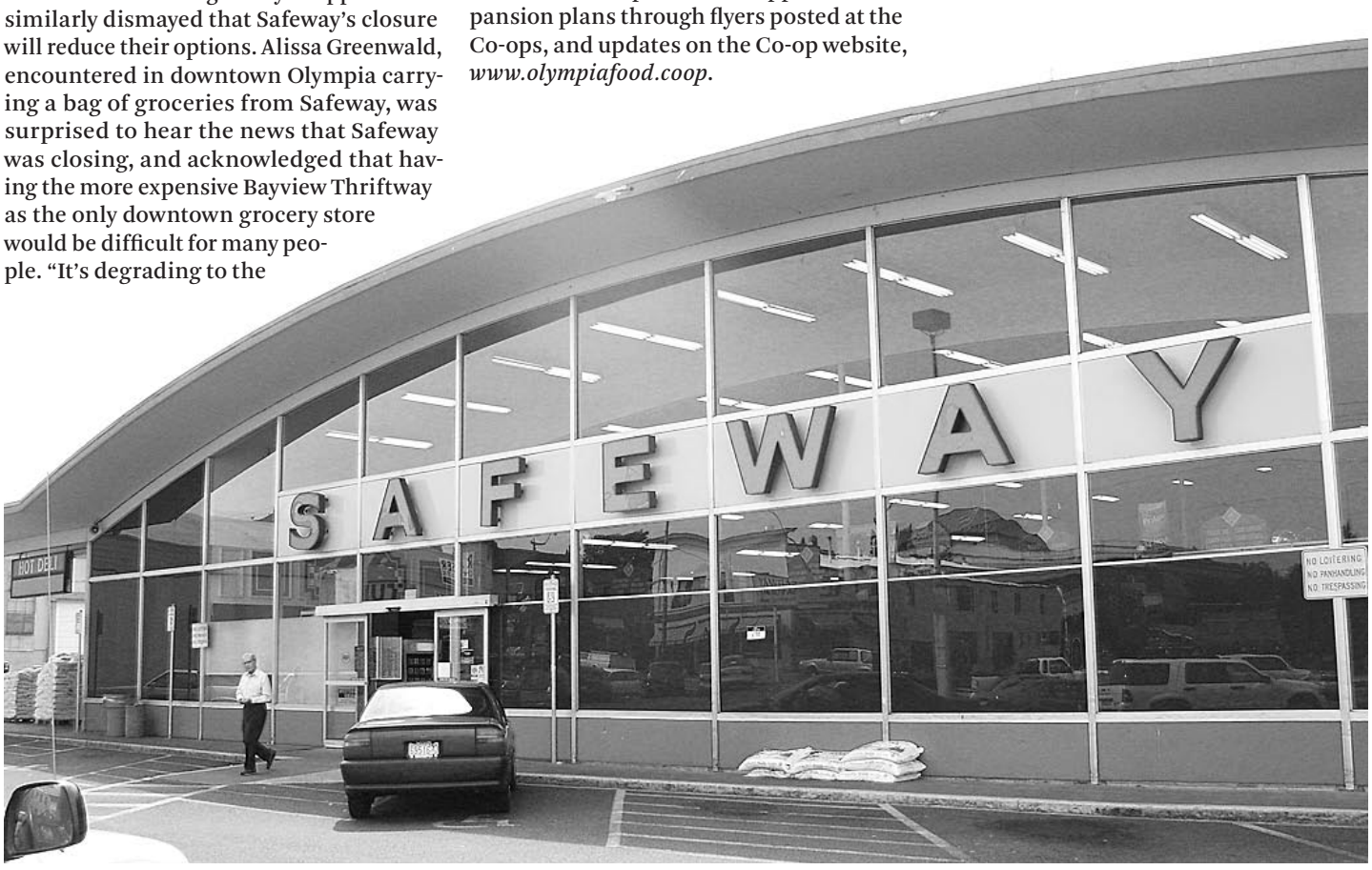
Downtown resident Jenny Jenkins, who doesn't own a car and walks to do her grocery shopping, expressed enthusiasm for the plan.

Jenkins said that Safeway's closure "is a big hassle, because I'm boycotting Bayview and Ralph's [due to their refusal to stock Plan B emergency contraception], and I like to shop where I can walk to from my home. Even if I weren't boycotting, Safeway is cheaper, and that's important."

Other downtown grocery shoppers were similarly dismayed that Safeway's closure will reduce their options. Alissa Greenwald, encountered in downtown Olympia carrying a bag of groceries from Safeway, was surprised to hear the news that Safeway was closing, and acknowledged that having the more expensive Bayview Thriftway as the only downtown grocery store would be difficult for many people. "It's degrading to the working class," Greenwald said.

A rumor that Trader Joe's was considering moving into the space being vacated by Safeway has been circulating, but Alison Mochizuki, a spokesperson for Trader Joe's headquarters in California, stated that "Olympia, Washington is not in our two year plan."

Grace Cox reported that the Co-op will continue to keep members apprised of expansion plans through flyers posted at the Co-ops, and updates on the Co-op website, *www.olympiafood.coop*.



The Olympia Food Co-op is setting its sights on the resident anti-Bayview location downtown.

(Photo by Janet Blanding)

Tacoma prosecutors busy themselves with Port cases

Meanwhile, Tacoma cops pursue imaginary Olympia "anarchist" cell

By Mark Jensen

TACOMA -- An additional pretrial hearing has been scheduled for twenty defendants who appeared in court from the port militarization resistance (PMR) protests that roiled the Port of Tacoma two months ago. Tacoma Municipal Court Judge Pro Tem Karl D. Haugh rebuked city attorneys for failing to provide video and other evidence to defense counsel, necessitating a further hearing.

The pretrial hearing has been scheduled for 1:30 pm on June 8, in Tacoma's City-County Building.

Beginning on Mar. 4 and lasting until the USNS Soderman sailed for Kuwait from Commencement Bay on Mar. 14, the protests at the origin of these cases involved hundreds of American citizens who objected to the use of the publicly-owned Port of Tacoma to ship vehicles and other equipment for the US Army's 4th Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division to Iraq, *prior to the departure of the soldiers themselves*.

The 4/2 Brigade is one of two Stryker brigades currently based at nearby Fort Lewis.

In April, the brigade's soldiers followed the equipment to Iraq. Some of them are already dead, including 19-year-old Aaron Gautier and 20-year-old Jonathan Hamm.

About 107 Fort Lewis soldiers have died in Iraq to date.

None of those details was mentioned in court on May 23rd, or appeared in documents connected to the case, but the soldiers or others like them were in the minds of all of those present, as people throughout the United States ponder how they can influence a government whose leaders are refusing to respond to a public mandate to bring the illegal, immoral, and disastrous war in Iraq to an end.

The Port of Tacoma protest was the largest yet in a spreading anti-Iraq war port militarization resistance movement that began in May 2006 at the Port of Olympia and spread to the Port of Grays Harbor, in Aberdeen in late April and, last weekend, to the Port of Oakland in California.

In all, thirty-six people were arrested during protests against the Port of Tacoma's military shipments in March. On Mar. 11, twenty-three protesters were arrested in what was perhaps the largest act of civil disobedience in Tacoma's history. Other arrests occurred when police unleashed tear gas and rubber bullets on peaceful protesters in what videographer Joe La Sac called a "police riot." The twenty summoned to Tacoma Municipal Court on Wednesday were arrested at five separate times and places.

> Documents that were released to defendants reveal that the Tacoma Police Department used "undercover officers" to spy on activists in Olympia.

Other cases continue to percolate in the system. Tom McCarthy of United for Peace of Pierce County, for example, was arrested when he violated an unconstitutional bag-and-backpack ban on Mar. 9.

Many local observers are asking why the City of Tacoma is wasting valuable resources that would be better spent fighting dangerous offenders. Some have speculated that a number of civil cases against the City of Tacoma stemming from the PMR protests may be a factor.

Is Tacoma improperly trying to protect itself from lawsuits by pursuing criminal convictions in cases that have already been dismissed by Pierce County prosecutors? In a heated exchange overheard Wednesday morning outside Room 233, where Judge Haugh was presiding, Assistant City Attorney Jean Hayes was heard insisting that it was she and she alone who decided which defendants would be prosecuted; Hayes denied knowing who had filed civil charges against the City of Tacoma.

About twenty supporters were in attendance on May 23, including Olympia City Councilmember TJ Johnson.

Most of the hour-long hearing before Judge Haugh dealt with evidentiary issues. The two attorneys representing the City of Tacoma, Charles Lee and Pedro Chou, began by announcing that they could still not provide video in the possession of the Tacoma Police Department. It should be ready "by the end of the week," Mr. Lee said. "If we don't get video, we will be in a position to dismiss some cases."

A 90-day-from-arraignment speedy trial deadline looms on Jun. 13 for the defendants arraigned on Mar. 15. Defense counsel Lawrence A. Hildes of Bellingham and Legrand Jones of Olympia ruled out any willingness to grant a speedy trial waiver.

Pro Tem Judge Karl D. Haugh gave city attorneys Lee and Chou until May 29th to mail defense counsel copies of police videos taken at the protests that were requested in discovery motions months ago. Judge Haugh also ordered Lee and Chou to produce the names of those who were in charge of riot police units deployed at the Port at the time of the arrests. The names of commanders were mysteriously redacted from copies provided to defense counsel last week.

"I'll talk to Sgt. [James] Barrett," said Mr. Lee.

"But it's not Sgt. Barrett who makes the decision," Judge Haugh replied. "Why is this redacted? Defendants do have a right to command structure and rules of engagement. If it's a human being, or rules or procedures, I do think it's discoverable."

Judge Haugh instructed Lee and Chou—who suggested that "security" concerns may have led authorities to conceal the identities—to come up with names: "I'm ordering that this be made available to counsel."

"Unredacted?" Mr. Lee asked.

"Unredacted!" replied Judge Haugh, who speculated aloud that a connection to the Department of Homeland Security may somehow be involved.

Earlier, Attorney Hildes had explained to the judge the importance of the issue: "These people have been arrested for violating rules of engagement which do not exist in writing, and the names of those who would know [what those rules were] are redacted."

Documents that were released to defendants reveal that the Tacoma Police Department used "undercover officers" to spy on activists in Olympia. A report by TPD Lt. Alan Roberts, for example, states that on Mar. 12, "At approximately 2100 hours, see case report for specific times, our undercover officers advised of 35 anarchist [*sic*] leaving Olympia northbound on I-5 enroute [*sic*] to Tacoma. About thirty minutes later, our undercover officers advised of another 35–40 anarchist [*sic*] leaving Olympia northbound on I-5."

Police spying on citizens guilty only of exercising their constitutional rights is also expected to be an issue in the civil suits being prepared against the City of Tacoma.

Mark Jensen is a member of United for Peace of Pierce County and of the faculty of Pacific Lutheran University.

Paying the price of political prosecution: Assessing the damage of the Oly 22

by Pat Tassoni

News of the demonstrations, protests, and arrests at the Port of Olympia in May of 2006 touched off a barrage of worldwide media coverage and criticism. It also became a sort of blueprint for how other ports were going to deal with demonstrations against military shipments as we've seen this year in Tacoma and Aberdeen.

Many in this community wonder why the prosecutors are pursuing convictions of the protesters with shaky evidence of an even more unclear crime at taxpayer expense when Tacoma, with much larger resources, is not pursuing charges against the majority of arrested protesters. It should be noted that the city of Olympia has not brought charges against anyone they arrested in May of 2006, but it is Thurston County that is prosecuting those arrested at that time by the Sheriff's department and the Washington State Patrol.

Possibly, the elected Ed Holm is using the Oly22 cases to repair the reputation of his office in the wake of the sexual harassment finding against his staff. Maybe Ed Holm is just trying to keep his staff busy with whatever comes up because there is not enough crime here to otherwise substantiate his department's budget.

The Port of Olympia has applied political pressure onto the county prosecutor's office to extort $29,000 from the protesters for damages caused on the port site. None of the protesters are charged with destruction of property, just trespass, so it's extremely unlikely that any restitution to the port will happen.

Even if we don't wonder how much thought is given by the prosecutor's office to the political choices of bringing the Oly22 to trial, we must wonder how much consideration is given to its economic costs. This question is an especially compelling one given the fact of the recent mistrial. Starting the process over again will most certainly end up costing the taxpayers more than it would get in return from the fines that come with convictions. I asked this of Ed Holm, and he replied that his office does not maintain financial cost records of individual cases and that he is not required to create such records. But I've managed to put together an estimate of court costs and counsel expenses from publicly available data (and I'm not even talking about the taxpayer costs of having Sheriff's deputies around the Port during the military shipment time).

There were 20 arrested for Criminal Trespass 2nd Degree—a misdemeanor status with a $1,000 maximum fine and up to 90 days in jail. Three arrested under this 'crime' have taken plea bargains at less than the full fine amount with no jail time, other than their day/night of arrest. The other two of the Oly22 took a plea agreement to their 'crime' of Riot without major fines and no lasting convictions. The prosecutors office has brought in about $2,500 in fees/fines so far for the county in the Oly22 case. For the remaining 17 protesters, the county can hope to recoup a maximum of $17,000. If the courts sentenced the protesters to jail, it would cost the taxpayers in the amount of $201,600 at $112 per person per day for the maximum duration. It is likely though that the future fines, if any, would be modeled after the first 5 cases with no jail time. Meaning: $8,500 more to the county.

> I estimate that the public has invested at least $25,000 in prosecuting the Oly22 so far.

I estimate that the public has invested at least $25,000 in prosecuting the Oly22 so far. As a conservative estimate, I am just looking at the fixed costs of salaries of public employees including the judges, prosecutors and assistants, bailiffs, public defenders, court reporters, and witnesses who waited for and/or did testify during the mistrial. I am not including costs of transcripts, clerk work, schedule shifts, and office supplies.

The public employees/positions (2005 records): District Court Judge Susan Dubuisson at $9,871.50/month; Superior Court Judge William McPhee at $5,183.79/month; Senior Deputy Prosecutor Steven Straume at $8,164.00/month; Deputy Prosecutor Deborah Eurich at about $5,500.00/month; Sheriff's Lieutenant Chris Mealy at $6,257.00/month; Sheriff's Captain Brad Watkins at $7,743.00/month; Port security officer Mike Crawford at $5,334.84/month; assistant to prosecutor at $3,262.00/month; court bailiff at $3,467.00/month; and court reporter at $4,897.00/month.

The courts have had 18 hearings for the Oly22 over the past year where they have spent 24 hours on their cases. In addition, another 24 hours was spent over the course of the week of the mistrial involving additional parties such as jurors, witnesses, and administrators. The prosecution and Judge Dubuisson has expressed interest in severing the cases – right now all remaining are lumped together in one big case in one big trial. Severing along the lines talked about would result in three case groups that would then each have their own trial with the same arguments, the same witnesses and the same prosecutorial team, but different jurors. Severance would triple the costs to the taxpayers of one big trial.

Every defendant is entitled to a trial or surely the justice system would grind to a halt if all cases had to be tried before a judge or jury. It wasn't until the number of cases needing trial far exceeded the number of courtrooms available that plea bargaining became commonplace. Only a small percentage of cases—estimates are between 5 percent and 12 percent—go to trial, the vast majority of the others are resolved through plea bargains.

The problem with this prosecutor's office is that they are unwilling or politically unable to present a reasonable plea bargain. Instead, they just keep throwing money at it to keep busy working on it, hoping it will just go away. If the plea bargain has the conviction as the maximum penalty for a crime, then there is no incentive for the defendant to plead guilty. The threshold for penalties of misdemeanor cases such as the Oly22 is so low already that there is not much room to bargain with. The county is spending tens of thousands of dollars, and may spend much more still, trying to get $11,000 out of the Oly22. When compared to the cost of a misdemeanor trial, offering any plea bargain–or dropping charges— is considerably less expensive.

After the mistrial, the judge has reset the case(s) to be done by the last week of June. So, we'll have to wait and see how much more of our money is spent on this.

Contributions to POLDF for litigation and advocacy should be made payable to Port of Olympia Legal Defense Fund. Contributions are not tax deductible and nonrefundable.

Donate via PayPal at www.paypal.com to the following address: oly.port.ldf@gmail.com or mail a contribution to Port of Olympia Legal Defense Fund, P.O. Box 295 Olympia, Washington 98507-0295.

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A glimpse of green hope amidst the grey walls

by Tovarish Didelphid Wagster

"*There's a Commie on every street-corner!*" During the phobia-filled 1950s, our nation reeled under the ill effects of the "Red Scare," persecuting and prosecuting many of its best thinkers and activists—those who refused to remain silent in the face of gross injustice. In recent years, the great Northwest has been targeted with a "Green Scare," reminiscent of those paranoid days of the McCarthy era.

Home to a great many threatened and endangered species, as well as a "threateningly" eco-friendly citizenry, the Pacific Northwest is now viewed as the natural base for yet another attempt to generate fear, this time under the ugly banner of "eco-terrorism." Diligent *Works in Progress* readers may recognize Jeff "Free" Luers as one of our bioregion's most noteworthy political prisoners. He's a 28-year-old Oregonian, who's presently locked-up tight in the Oregon State Penitentiary, serving out the sixth year of his obscene 23-year sentence.

His "crime"?

Feeling.

Feeling passionately about the dire state of our troubled planet. Feeling contemptuous of America's self-destructive car culture. Feeling worried about the current global warming trends.

Admittedly, Jeffrey Luers was "guilty" of moving beyond these mere feelings and morphing them into a desperate and heroic action.

In 2001, Jeff was convicted for attempting to torch three SUVs at a car dealership in Eugene, Oregon. No one was hurt, nor was that the action's intent. The moderate damages totaled $40,000, and two of the three vehicles were later resold (once their tires had been replaced.) His record-breaking prison sentence, 266 months, marks the longest ever awarded for an act of eco-sabotage in America. It is glaringly obvious that this judgment was based on Jeff's "radical" politics rather than upon the severity of the crime itself. The State's absurd attempt to place this symbolic act of property damage on a par far above that of rapists, murderers, and major arsonists has been met with global dismay, while Jeff has received widespread public support. For this reason, his case was recently sent back to the Court of Appeals, which remanded it to the Circuit Court for resentencing. With luck, this may very well result in a reduced prison term for Mr. Luers.

Here's a hope-filled update from Jeff, (via the "Oregon Dept. of Corrections", Inmate Mail), penned at the end of March 2007:

Tova,

Thanks for the cards. Most people don't put in the effort to keep writing after that many mail violations.

So yeah, looks like I "officially" won my appeal last Friday (3/23). That was the deadline to appeal the appeal. No one seems to know how long until the resentencing. No time soon, that's for sure. But, it seems rather clear that the absolute worst case scenario is that I get sentenced to 12 years. And 10 is probably more likely.

Things are getting ready to switch over to the summer schedule pretty soon. I'm looking forward to that. It means being able to go outside until it gets near dark.

Things aren't as good here as they were a couple of years ago. But it isn't all that bad. I think aside from the obvious, I just miss spontaneity the most.

Still, I've made some great lifelong friends here. And I've had some really good times and memorable experiences. Like any other situation, it is what you make of it. I've made it into something that I'll be proud of when I leave.

Thanks again for the cards and the support. I appreciate it.

Jeff

For more info on this case, visit *freefreenow.org*.

You can also write to Jeff at:
Jeffrey Luers, #13797671
Oregon State Penitentiary (OSP)
2605 State St.
Salem, OR 97310

Critical links to reach other "Green Scare" defendants may be found at these sites: *freefreenow.org/greenscare.htm*; *GreenScare.org*; Civil Liberties Defense Center (*cldc.org*); Earth Liberation Prisoners Support Network (*www.spiritoffreedom.org.uk*); and Olympia Civil Liberties Resource (*olycivlib.blogspot.com*).

Olympia City Council rejects Bush/Cheney impeachment

by Gail Johnson

The Olympia City Council's General Government Committee voted 2–1 not to endorse the resolution calling on Congress to begin an impeachment investigation of Bush and Cheney. Jeff Kingsbury and Joe Hyer voted against the resolution; T.J. Johnson voted in support.

Prior to that meeting, Hyer sent an email dated April 24 to all the members of the City Council. "I have researched and thought on this issue for several months, in addition to speaking with community members and local elected officials," he wrote. "In addition, I met specifically with Congressman Baird in Washington DC last week, and with Congressman Smith's staff, on this specific issue."

Much of what he wrote came from the familiar Pelosi script—it's a lost cause, it's divisive, it will take two years and cost $50 million, will generate a backlash, distract from the Democrat's agenda, it will be seen as political, Bush is a lame duck so why bother, etc, etc. These reasons do not stand up to scrutiny and the memo should not go without comment.

Among the arguments against impeachment, Hyer tossed out this one:

"This plays into the President's hand. If Congress says, Sir—you violated habeas corpus, did illegal wiretaps, and undermined the Separation of Powers...then the President says, 'Yes I did, and I would do it again and again if it means keeping Americans safe from terrorists. There is a higher law of the land, and protecting American citizens from attacks like 9/11 is primary concern...and if Congress has laws that run contrary to this, I will do the RIGHT thing every time—and protect our people.' While I disagree with this statement, it will be made, and many in this country will buy the argument. Why give him the advantage of defending these actions?"

The whole point of impeachment is to answer this essential question: Does the President have the power to ignore laws when he deems it necessary? Those of us who support impeachment believe that Presidents do not have this power. A President is expected to work within the constraints of limited and divided powers, where the three branches provide checks and balances against tyranny. There is no higher law of the land than the Constitution.

If Congress does not stand up and affirm the Constitution by telling the President he does not have the power to violate our law, then we will move closer to a Unitary Executive form of government rather than a government with three co-equal branches.

Hyer also objected to specific statements in the resolution. For example, he objected to the resolution's statement that Bush and Cheney conspired to intentionally mislead Congress and the public to justify the Iraq war. "While one might be able to prove conspiracy, it is nearly impossible to prove 'intention'...often, the only way to prove intent is for an admission by those intending—and that's most likely not going to occur," Hyer wrote.

I think, however, that most people will say it was "intentional" when the President and Vice President chose to continue to use information that experts told them was false. Some might even say it is the definition of lying. Experts told the President and Vice President before March 2003 that there were no weapons of mass destruction, that Iraq had no nuclear capability, nor were they seeking to obtain material capable of making a nuclear weapon, that Iraq was not involved in 9/11, and that there were no ties between Saddam and Al Quada.

> All actions in a political body are by definition political. Politicians who don't want to be political should choose another line of work.

Hyer also claimed that the signing statements are not an issue. "Signing statements, while not widely used previous to this President, did exist before," he wrote. "To say they are illegal/unconstitutional only NOW (based on their use by a specific president), seems more of a political argument than a legal one."

It is true that other Presidents have used signing statements and Congress did not object. It started innocently enough, as slippery slopes often do. Initially, they were used to make the law's intent clear. It is also true that Clinton's lawyers believed that a President could refuse to implement a law he believed was unconstitutional, although that was never tested by the Courts.

No President, however, has issued as many signing statements as Bush, which number over 1,000, to various provisions of laws. In many, he expresses the Unitary Executive doctrine. For example, the President issued a signing statement proclaiming he had the right to determine whether torture will be used. In another, he stated that he would decide what information a Federal agency could release to Congress.

Hyer's argument here is a perfect example of how precedents work: because other Presidents have used signing statements, every President can use them. To object, he implied, is "political."

It is now clear that signing statements are a danger to our form of government. It is hard to take back power but it is possible. Congress must assert that signing statements are, and always have been, unconstitutional.

Another interesting point raised here centers on what is political. Hyer implies that holding the President accountable is political and therefore bad. However, saying that the President should not be brought up on impeachment charges is just as political as saying he should. All actions in a political body are by definition political. Politicians who don't want to be political should choose another line of work.

Although Hyer makes the precedent argument for allowing Bush to use signing statements, he then goes on to dismiss the idea that a precedent will be established if the Congress does not impeach Bush for violating laws and eroding the Bill of Rights. "Not everyone is held accountable for speeding in Washington State—but that does not give all drivers the authority to speed via 'precedent'," he stated. "If we simply want to avoid precedent, Congressional action to void signing statements (or not allow them by law) could be employed. Clarification of the War Powers Act, National Security Act, and others could easily avoid this being a precedent. Lastly, it seems odd that a BAD example becomes a precedent, when the vast majority of citizens see it as an example we DON'T want to see again. Most citizens, I assume, are thinking 'we don't want this to happen again'—that in and of itself cancels out the 'precedent'."

Without impeachment, every President who follows Bush will claim the power to make decisions that send our troops to invade and occupy other countries, the right to decide who will be tortured, the right to spy on anyone for any reason without a warrant, and the right to arrest and detain anyone without due process. To object, they will say, is merely "political."

How does Hyer think citizens could cancel out a "precedent"? Do they just call up the President to say that signing statements are a bad idea and he should stop—or invading and occupying another country is a bad idea and shouldn't be done again? It does not work this way. They have to rely on their elected representatives to stand up to "bad ideas" and hold presidents accountable.

The suggestion that Congress can fix this problem by passing more laws that say "unconstitutional actions are illegal" is like rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic. Unless the Congress is willing to hold the president and vice president accountable, it really does not matter how many laws they pass. The laws only have force and effect if Congress is willing to hold the president and vice president accountable when they violate them. And the only way to do that is through impeachment.

It is a sad day for democracy when elected officials are willing to let the Constitution be dismantled—and allow the rights of the people to be disappeared—because they lack the courage to be political and do the right thing.

Gail Johnson is a member of the Citizens' Movement to Impeach Bush/Cheney. Email: impeachbush@riseup.net; www.citizensimpeach.org

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Free Radio Olympia suspends operations due to FCC harassment

by Drew Hendricks and DJ Megawatti

Free Radio Olympia (FRO) ceased transmitting its signal over the airwaves on May 22nd to avoid a probable raid by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The interruption of our service to the community will last until a new volunteer steps forward to host our transmitter, accepting the risk of a raid or FCC visit.

Recent FCC harassment has escalated significantly, both statewide and nationwide. The FCC has also recently harassed two other unlicensed stations in Washington State, according to DIY Media's FCC enforcement database. They are located in Port Townsend and Everett.

FRO recognizes that free speech is a right that is denied to the people by the federal government as represented by the FCC and corporate media groups such as the National Association of Broadcasters and its powerful members such as ClearChannel. These corporatists maintain a powerful monopoly over media in the United States and have no interest in providing the public with access to the public airwaves.

FRO opposes the corporate domination of radio, which privatizes what should be a public community service. In addition, we believe that the FCC's recently enacted licensing structure for low-power FM operations has failed to serve the needs of communities, though we love and support KOWA 106.5 FM in its struggle to maintain local low-power operations within the ridiculous broadcast location restrictions they have been assigned by the FCC.

FRO's goal is to provide information and education to the community by offering diverse content including independent and local music, alternative commentary and news programs, and coverage of local events, none of which are made available by corporate radio stations in our area.

The content and nature of free radio broadcasting is determined by whoever feels the need and desire for expression on the airwaves by participating in the FRO collective, with the only limit to speech being an intolerance of hate speech and direct threats to individuals.

On Oct. 29, 2004, in response to a request by KBCS on 91.3 in Bellevue, FRO moved our broadcast frequency to 101.9 FM, where we continued to broadcast in defiance of the government and industry's unwarranted attempts to restrict and control access to the electromagnetic spectrum.

FRO's use of 91.3 might have prevented some listeners of KBCS from tuning into their favorite radio station, thus limiting their freedom of choice. KBCS is a progressive community station that airs many of the same important public affairs programs FRO airs such as *Democracy Now!* and *Free Speech Radio News*. The members of FRO reached consensus that the responsible course of action was to change our frequency to one not used by broadcasters near enough to have listeners in Olympia.

As an unlicensed, unregulated micro-power radio station, FRO has always held to the belief that no one owns the airwaves, and that no government or entity should have the authority to own, rent or sell access to the radio frequency spectrum as if it were real estate. In fact, some of us believe no one should have the authority to own, rent or sell real estate! Still, it is not the fault of the renter that the landlord exacts a toll.

While KBCS is a licensed station, it does not have freedom of mobility on the dial. FRO, as an autonomous station, has much more freedom. As good community oriented radio pirates, we held ourselves accountable to our mission statement and relinquished our squat on 91.3 for the good of the people, letting the progressive voice of KBCS again have room on Olympia's dial.

On Mar. 1, 2005, FRO changed frequency again to 98.5 FM, this time in response to pressure from Sunny 102/KSWW in Grays Harbor County. We moved off of 101.9 because KSWW had complained that we were interfering with their signal. FRO was not interfering with this station within its protected contour, the reach of its signal guaranteed by its license. We were broadcasting with low power well outside of KSWW's target listening area. KSWW did not desire FRO's demise, only that we vacate its first adjacent frequency. KSWW management brought its complaint directly to FRO, a show of good faith we decided to return in kind by complying with their wishes.

As an unlicensed micro-power radio station, FRO is being forced into a corner and ultimately there will be nowhere left for us to go on the dial. We did not make our stand on 101.9, but there will come a time, sooner or later, when we will be forced to make a stand; to defend our right to broadcast under the First Amendment, which guarantees freedom of speech and of the press. When that time comes FRO will need all the community support we can get.

For more information about fro or to get involved, visit us online at frolympia.org, or email us at fro@riseup.net, or call us at 705-9780, or you can drop off notes or goods for us at Last Word Books downtown. You may contact the authors of this article by phone at (360) 870-3127.

The swoop on Frank's Landing

by Daisy Ouye

"I thought there must have been a murder down there or something." This was the response of a Nisqually Wildlife Refuge employee to the excessive number of police vehicles blocking the main road leading to Frank's Landing Smoke Shop. "I told my crew it must be something serious to use all those resources."

He, like many others familiar with the Frank's Landing Native Community, was angered to hear of the raid on the smoke shop located on tribal land in Nisqually. Even more upsetting was the home raid on the shop's owners, Hank and Alison Gottfriedson.

On the early morning of May 15, armed federal agents with search dogs invaded this small peaceful community. That day Billy Frank, along with many other tribal leaders were finalizing an agreement on shellfish gathering that's been 17 years in the making during the same time the raids were carried out. Was this a coincidence?

Agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms worked in cooperation with Washington State Liquor Control Board Tobacco Tax Unit and the US Attorneys Office in Seattle. Climbing through bushes with guns raised, they approached the home of the Gottfriedsons: Hank, Alison, and their two granddaughters, 10 and 11 years old.

One of the girls heard the noises outside and opened the door as officers prepared to plow it down with a battering ram. The girls were taken outside at gunpoint, in their pajamas and patted down. Obviously, this is not standard procedure. When Hank asked if the girls could at least go inside and get dressed, the federal agents stepped aside to discuss whether or not these children could put clothes on, finally deciding they weren't a threat.

"They scared the heck out of my grandkids," said Alison Gottfriedson. "They took both the computers and they trashed the whole house."

"They trashed her bedroom," said Maiselle Bridges, Alison's mother, noting the level of invasion on her daughter's home. Maiselle is an honored elder and head caretaker for Wa He Lut Indian School. The smoke shop was also raided and the entire stock of cigarettes was confiscated.

"Operation Chainsmoker" consisted of seven search warrants targeting two Oregon wholesalers, four Native smoke shops and two private homes. Law enforcement calls these raids a continuation of an operation carried out in 2003, in which allegedly untaxed cigarettes were confiscated from several other native smoke shops.

Frank's Landing Native Community has been negotiating for a state compact since December 2005, and the government has not yet made an offer that wouldn't put Frank's Landing out of business. "They need to come to the table," said Alison.

The Yakima Nation is also negotiating with the state. They say they will accept the state's demand to work out issues of the compact, but that the tax has caused destruction to the tribal economy and people. 19 of 29 Washington Native Communities have these compacts or state contracts to collect taxes that are used to support tribal programs. Proceeds from Frank's Landing smoke shop are used for supplies and equipment at Wa He Lut Indian school, teaching native studies to native children without tuition. It also funds programs that help the poor and the tribes' mental health care programs. All of these funds have been frozen by "Operation Chainsmoker."

For the purpose of reaffirming the US government's commitment to tribal sovereignty and self-determination, President Bill Clinton issued a revised Executive Order in 2000 on consultation and coordination with Native Tribal Government. It was proclaimed to ensure that all Executive departments and agencies consult with Native tribes and respect tribal sovereignty as the agencies consider policy initiatives that affect Native communities.

> For over a decade they endured night raids, tear gas, clubbings and beatings, stealing of their nets and sinking of their boats. They have held a culture celebrated here for thousands of years, with strength, dignity and perseverance.

The Frank's Landing Native Community, and this family in particular, were at the forefront of a nationwide struggle in the 1970s to keep fishing rights promised to them by the Medicine Creek Treaty. For over a decade they endured night raids, tear gas, clubbings and beatings, stealing of their nets and sinking of their boats. They have held a culture celebrated here for thousands of years, with strength, dignity and perseverance.

"Alison was two and a half the first time she saw a raid," said Maiselle. After the recent raids, Maiselle told me she looked down at her youngest great-grandchild, who is six months old, and wondered if he too, would endure similar treatment on his ancestral land.

"They need to stop the attacks on Frank's Landing," said Alison. "They need to honor the treaties."

The federal government needs to explain how they are following Clinton's order while freezing funds to essential programs, seizing property and forcefully invading homes of Native people. Governor Christine Gregoire and the State of Washington need to explain how they can help coordinate raids during negotiations, and finally, someone needs to be accountable for the ill-treatment of the Gottfriedson's grandchildren.

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A veteran's reflections on Memorial Day

by Wes Hamilton

It's Memorial Day in the US. I've been pondering what that means. Usually the television schedule is filled with shows and stories oriented toward the US military experience. The menu includes movies about Vietnam, World War II, and the Revolutionary War. Pursuant to its tradition, the Discovery Channel will allocate several hours to the examination of the weapon systems currently available or being planned for the US military arsenal. Even the History Channel will devote special attention to one or more of the US's many military exploits over the last 230 years. The streets in towns across the country will be lined with US flags, and local newspapers will be drenched with stories about heroes and warriors. Is that what it's all about?

I know the history of this holiday; that it grew out of a desire to honor the sacrifices of Union soldiers during the Civil War. I also know it has grown into something that both feeds on and nurtures a truly insidious part of the base morality of this culture. It exemplifies our compulsion to focus so much attention on our militaristic heritage. I guess it's not really all that surprising since military conflicts define much of the history of the US. What I find troubling about all the present Memorial Day focus is the scale of the glorification of war and the emphasis on the "gallant sacrifices of those who died to preserve our freedom."

In truth, it seems to me it's not the dead we are memorializing, or the supposed "freedom" their lives bequeathed. It's all about creating a myth of grand proportions to hold together the unquestioned patriotic zeal of the masses, and cultivate a fertile foundation for recruiting a new generation willing to lay down its life for the "cause." It's all about re-writing history to give purchase to the false ideal that one's death in combat is somehow more pure than death by any other means. It disregards the fact that death is death. It's brainwashing in its most insidious form.

I have no problem with the idea of remembrance. I think it's a wonderful way to give some perspective to our place in the ever changing human condition. I also think it can serve as a tremendous benefit to us to stop periodically and look at who we are by way of those who have set the stage for what we are today, and to see the impact they and we have on the progression of both human society and its impact on the environment. My difficulty with the current celebration is its singular focus on the remembrance of war and the glorification of militarism.

Imagine how much more powerful to our collective consciousness and our moral base it would be to remember other sacrifices. How about of the indigenous people on this continent, as well as around the world, who sacrificed their place and gave of their own cultural heritage for the demands of colonial expansion? What about the millions of slaves, torn from their own culture, denied their humanity, and upon whose back much of this country's early development depended? Similarly, what about the sacrifices of working class people and laborers who came to this country, and who continue to come, whose sweat is the blood sacrifice they offer? What about all of those over the centuries whose labor has been exploited in the mines, fields, mills, and factories to serve the larger interests of this society?

For me, Memorial Day is an opportunity to reflect on the true cost of our social development in both human and environmental terms. It is a chance to discover and teach the truth to our children, that what we have and what we are today does indeed come at a cost, but the cost does not have to be in the form of needless wars to be valued. The sacrifices of each generation and each subjugated culture can be seen in the fear provoked in the hearts of those wielding power and the strength of the effort to suppress, contain, and crush the will of those who would courageously give voice to the true ideal of the human spirit. If there is glory to be had in the giving of one's life for a cause, which is better: to die in battle fighting for the political and material benefit of a few, or standing in defiance of the will of a few to advance the humanity of all? For me, Memorial Day is a chance to remember all of the struggles throughout history, whether written or not, of simple people trying to hold on to their dignity and shed the yoke of oppression.

Changes at Works in Progress

Constrained financial circumstances have brought about some changes in the June issue of *Works in Progress*. Currently, *Works in Progress* has only enough advertising revenue to sustain an eight-page issue. In order to accommodate as many articles as possible with our reduced size, we are running fewer photos and graphics.

Sadly, we had to cut or postpone publication of several articles, most by local writers, all of which we felt would have been of interest to our readership.

WIP's mission is to provide a voice for those who might otherwise be silenced or unheard, and we hope this mission can continue to be fulfilled.

As the *WIP* workers deliberate various fundraising options and work to increase advertising revenue, we hope that you will consider making a contribution: Checks should be made out to *Works in Progress* and mailed to PO Box 295, Olympia, WA, 98507.

Thank you for your continuing support of *Works in Progress*!

Wes Hamilton is a former US Marine and combat veteran of Vietnam. A longtime social justice activist, he was a founding member of the Olympia Rachel Corrie Chapter of Veterans for Peace.

The "war on terror" strikes Chechnya with a deathly silence

by Erin Genia

Chechnya falls outside Americans' awareness of international affairs, despite the dire impact of US foreign policy on the embattled republic. Russia is a key US counterterrorism ally whose participation in the "war on terror" legitimizes its conquest of Chechnya.

The media is responsible for public approval of atrocities against the Chechen people by issuing reports that omit crucial realities of the crisis—its history, pervading human rights abuses, and impunity—in addition, bias is exhibited in assertions that all Chechens are Muslim "terrorists." Many journalists who do report accurately on Chechnya have, like its people, "disappeared," suffered torture, or execution. Anna Politkovskaya was one who bore witness to the savage oppression faced by Chechens, and revealed it to the world. She was murdered, eight months ago, in retaliation for her courageous work.

For three centuries Chechen people have endured despotic attempts by Russian forces, who covet their territory strategically (it's an age-old trade route near the Black and Caspian Seas), and economically (it's rich in oil), to give up their land. The people there have continually resisted colonialism, culturally, nonviolently, and with arms.

In 1943, under Stalin's liquidation campaign, nearly 150,000 Chechens perished in forced deportations. At the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Chechnya declared independence from the empire that committed genocide upon them. In response, Russian president Yelstin sent in troops, which were deflected by the Chechens. Three years later, Russia decided to take Chechnya by force. Outnumbered Chechen guerillas drove out Russian troops in humiliation after two years of war, and almost 100,000 casualties.

Chechnya's persistent refusal to acknowledge Moscow provoked Russia to invade it again, in 1999—this time with 100,000 troops. This second war was ground zero for horrendous war crimes committed by the Russian army. Sophie Shihab, correspondent for *Le Monde* interviewed a Russian detention camp guard who said, "Here they are literally massacred. You should hear their screams, cries of strong men whose every bone is being broken. Some are sodomized; some are forced to sodomize others. If there is a hell, this is it."

In this ongoing conflict—further complicated by the so-called "war on terror"—the Russian army has slaughtered whole villages, "disappeared" people, tortured and raped, and sanctioned death squads to carry out extrajudicial killings. Chechen militias have committed reprisals in the form of terror, hostage-taking and deploying suicide bombs in heavily populated Russian cities. In retaliation, the Russian military, one of the largest in the world, has collectively punished Chechen civilians.

According to an article written by Politkovskaya, "President Putin has become a full member of the international club for the 'combat of international terrorism' and has given the military carte blanche in Chechnya. Bush and Blair have forgiven him the crimes committed there, and he, for his part, has turned a blind eye to their activities." As long as Russia exploits the false pretense of security under the guise of the "war on terror," the international community will accept continuing bloodshed in Chechnya.

> As long as Russia exploits the false pretense of security under the guise of the "war on terror," the international community will accept continuing bloodshed in Chechnya.

In Chechnya, impunity is an impediment to justice. The 2006 Amnesty International Report states, " The majority of investigations into alleged [human rights] violations were ineffective and the prosecution of the handful of cases that came to court was flawed." In a significant evasion of justice this year, Putin appointed Ramzan Kadyrov to the presidency of Chechnya. Kadyrov is suspected of numerous war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the assassination of Anna Politkovskaya.

In order to eliminate opposition, the Kremlin covertly targets journalists who disseminate Russian crimes in Chechnya. Anna Politkovskaya was a high-profile Russian journalist who investigated events there. In her book, *A Dirty War*, Politkovskaya observes, "Chechnya today is one constant and bloody battle for control over oil wells and illegal refineries, but the republic itself does not benefit one jot from all of this. It has the resources neither to restore its industry nor to build houses for the homeless. Its oil is helping all kinds of people but not Chechnya itself." Tragically, on October 7, 2006, the mother of two young children was found shot to death in the elevator of her apartment building.

She was tortured by the same officials she exposed as war criminals. In February, 2001, she was detained incommunicado for two days by Russian forces. She was on assignment for Novaya Gazeta, investigating prison conditions and a mass grave in southern Chechnya. Of her ordeal, Politkovskaya said, "After seeing how they treated me, a journalist, I am convinced that all the complaints of local residents about how they are mistreated are true."

Fourteen journalists have been murdered since Vladimir Putin took office in 2000. No real investigations have transpired, and none of the killers have been brought to justice. In a press release regarding Politkovskaya's slaying, Human Rights Watch stated, "There can be no question but that Politkovskaya was killed in retribution for her work," and continued, "A ttacks on journalists are crimes not only against individuals but against free speech itself."

Public awareness of the crisis in Chechnya faces an unequivocal obstacle –silence. A study by Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting found that, compared to reports about the Indonesian tsunami in 2005, many of the world's worst humanitarian disasters were unmentioned in the mainstream press. For every article about the crisis in Chechnya, there were twelve on the tsunami. Lack of American outcry over Chechnya has been caused by this media blackout.

Americans play a role in the subjugation of Chechnya because our policymakers' decisions directly affects Chechens in the "war on terror." We send tens of millions in military aid to Russia. As a result, hundreds of thousands of dispossessed refugees live without basic necessities in Chechnya, death squads terrorize, lawlessness reigns, profiteering goes unchecked, and journalists who speak out are forever silenced.

History has shown that Chechens will continue to strive for autonomy. The people of Chechnya deserve our support in seeking reparations for the abuses they have suffered. Anna Politkovskaya, in an interview with The Guardian said of her work, "Each time I go there, people tell me things. They do so in the sincere hope that, if I record what is actually happening, it will lead to change, to peace ... the more I think about it, the more I would be betraying these people if I walked away." Let us remember her words and her life, and not turn a blind eye to the people of Chechnya.

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